

Chapter 4- Success

In mid-2003 negotiations began in earnest between King County and the State Department of Natural Resources. With the signing of a Purchase and Sale Agreement in October (check date), all that remained to seal the fate of this property was enabling legislation from the King County Council.

On December 4, 2003 many members of the Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance took time out of their busy schedules to come and testify at a Council Budget Committee hearing. Their testimony was compelling and, in turn, they were commended by many of my colleagues for the amazing effort they put forward to ensure their dream became a reality.

On December 15th, 2003 the project that some of my constituents have been working on for almost 10 years finally became a reality. With a unanimous vote, the Council passed legislation setting up a financing plan to acquire Juanita Woodlands. Once again a large group of Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance members were on hand to celebrate with us on final passage! A formal ceremony will be scheduled in January to commemorate the transfer of the property.



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Councilmember Jane Hague
County Report
Winter 2004
METROPOLITAN
KING COUNTY
COUNCIL
DISTRICT 11

Urban Forest Preserved!

Dear Finn Hill, and Holmes Point Neighbors:



Exciting News! The wonderful parcel of open space spanning Holmes Point Drive from Juanita Drive to just above Lake Washington is going to be saved as open space; and you, the residents that have rallied around a special place in your neighborhood can take a lot of the credit!

King County has signed a contract purchase agreement with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, taking this property off the auction block for the State School Construction Fund. Use of King County's dedicated Conservation Futures Fund for part of the purchase will ensure that most of the property is saved as permanent open space. And the half million dollars raised by the Friends of Juanita Woodlands ensures that the property will always be under the stewardship of those that care for it the most.

To the over 500 activists and neighbors who contributed whatever they could afford – from the young 10 ½ year old who contributed ½ of his 2002 charitable contributions budget (\$5 of \$10) to the biking enthusiast who pledged \$100,000 as a challenge grant – I tip my hat!! You were, and are, the defining factor in a story which has had a very happy ending.

I am proud to have taken part in this extraordinary project! The conservation of the Juanita Woodlands is an example of how government should work. It has

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King County



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been a story of partnerships - between King County, the Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance, your locally formed Finn Hill Park District, the City of Kirkland, and state and federal granting agencies. Even now, on an adjoining corner of Juanita Woodlands, a local restaurateur is opening a morning bakery and coffee café. Once again, the neighborhood is coming together to landscape that property for wildlife so that “paths of morning coffee drinkers cross the paths of Woodlands wildlife.”

This has been an exciting and worthwhile cause that we have all accomplished. I want to thank everyone who worked to preserve Juanita Woodlands. I will be visiting it regularly and look forward to seeing you there.

Warm Regards,

Jane



History of the Juanita Woodlands Project

Chapter 1- Testing the waters

On May 5, 1996 the Holmes Point/Finn Hill Communities officially became a part of Council District 11. In June of 1996, one of the first communications I received from my newest constituents was a heads up that the neighborhood would be asking for my help in converting a parcel of State DNR property to a park that could be enjoyed by all. Even then there were concerns that this property would be sold off in order to benefit the State School Construction Fund.

During the next several years, my office worked with the County Parks Department seeking a land swap between the County and the State DNR which would fill the legal requirements of the State School Construction Fund while protecting the 37 acres parcel that is today called Juanita Woodlands. There was significant lack of interest on the part of the State and efforts lagged.

Chapter 2- Moving Ahead at Last

With a new Commissioner of Public Lands at the helm in 2001 and economic pressures on the agency to convert properties to cash for the School Construction Fund a new urgency was felt by those of us working to save the property. In April of 2001, Kirkland Mayor Larry Springer and I wrote Commissioner Doug Sutherland to open discussions on the future of this property, and requesting that its sale be placed in abeyance while these discussions took place.

Commissioner Sutherland agreed, and some initial discussions with King County and City of Kirkland took place. The Cascade Land Conservancy also weighed in with their concerns and an offer to help preserve the property in a way that would address the legal requirements while permanently protecting the parcel.

A meeting in November, 2001 between the Commissioner and myself also included representatives from the City of Kirkland, the Cascade Land Conservancy, Denny Creek

Neighborhood Alliance, King County Staff, and staff from state and federal representative’s offices. The bottom line was that shortly after this meeting, Commissioner Sutherland offered an 18 month reprieve to permit work on a solution that would “simultaneously fulfill trust responsibilities, and meet the needs of King County, the City of Kirkland, and the local citizens.”



Chapter 3- Mobilizing

My office convened a working group of dedicated individuals to consider the best way to ensure that the Juanita Woodlands would be a part of Kirkland forever. Included in that group were representatives from the King County’s Department of Natural Resources, the Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance, the City of Kirkland the Cascade Land Conservancy, the State Department of Natural Resources, and staff from my office. This group investigated every possible way that we could set this forestland - which predates Washington’s statehood - aside.

We organized an aggressive plan that included private fundraising, grant searches at state and national levels and enabling legislation at the County level. With the \$500,000 raised by Friends of Juanita Woodlands combined with designated funding from King County’s Conservation Futures Fund what had been a great idea was beginning to turn into a real possibility.